XII

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Degrees of Reality.

So far as the absolute is concerned, there are no degrees at all. The conception of degrees has meaning only for the finite intelligence which distinguishes things. It has no ultimate value. In the meta-physical reality of the Upanisads we have no scale of grades. Yet it has significance in the world of experience. All progress in the world involves it, and any demand for, advance and alteration in existence presupposes it. This view of the Upanisads is defended by Śaṁkara. In reply to the dilemma, Is Brahman known or is it not known?, if known, we need not inquire into its nature; if not known, it will not be worth our while to inquire, Śaṁkara says that reality as self is indubitably known.

It posits itself in such sayings as "I question" or "I doubt." That something is real is a self-evident truth, and its nature we have to understand. This reality which we realise serves as the criterion to distinguish degrees in existence. The theory of the world illusion is inconsistent with the conception of degrees of reality. The Upanisads give us a hierarchy of different grades of reality down from the all embracing absolute, which is the primary source as well as the final

Consummation of the world process. The different kinds of being are higher and lower manifestations of the one absolute Spirit. For nothing on earth stands alone, however relatively complete & self-subsisting it may appear. While the absolute is in all finite things & permeates them the things differ in the degrees of their permeability, in the fullness of the reflections they give forth.

"Not all parts like, but all alike informed, with radiant light ---."

There is a richer revelation of reality in organised life than in brute matter, more in human society than in organised life. Life is a higher category than matter. Self-conscious thought is more concrete than mere consciousness." ----- in man, again, the Self develops gradually, for he is the most endowed with knowledge. He says what he has known and sees what he has known. He knows what is to happen tomorrow, he knows the visible and the invisible worlds. By means of the mortal he desires the immortal - thus is he endowed. With regard to other animals, hunger and thirst are a kind of understanding. But they do not say what they have known, nor do they see what they have known; they do not know what is to happen tomorrow nor the visible & the invisible worlds. They go so far & no further." (Aitareya Aranyaka II. 3. 1-5). Though the same reality is seen "in the star, in the stone, in the flesh, in the soul and the clod", still it is

seen more fully in living beings than in dead matter, in developing man than in the satisfied beast, in the spiritual life than in the intellectual. The Aitareya Upanisad alludes to the fourfold classification of jivas into those born of 1) uterus, jarāyuja, like men and the higher animals; 2) those born of egg, andaja, like crows and ducks; 3) those born of moisture, Svedaja, like worms and insects; 4) those born of earth, udbhija, like plants: (III · 3.). The classification proceeds on the mode of appearance of the different beings on earth. See also Manu I 43-46. Aristotle speaks of vegetable, animal & human souls. Leibniz classifies living beings into plants, animals and men.

"From that self (Brahman) sprang forth ether (ākāśa): from ether air, from air fire, from fire water, from water earth. From earth herbs, from herbs food, from food seed, from seed man. Man thus consists of the essence of food." (Tait. II. 1.). In discussing the physical basis of life the author gives an account of the evolution of matter. Ether comes first, with the single property of sound: It is that through which we hear. From ether we proceed to air which has the property of ether and also that of tangibility. It is that through

which we hear and feel. From air comes fire. It is that by which we hear, feel & see. From fire we get to water. We can taste it. also. From water comes earth, that by which we hear, see, feel, taste & smell. Though the Science presupposed might appear to be fanciful at the present day, still there was a principle involved in the account. It is in the Upanisads that we have for the first time the doctrine of the five elements. The distinction of the elemental essence or the tanmātra and the gross embodiment or substance is suggested. The Chāndogya Upanisad sometimes suggests that the things of the world are qualitatively distinct from one another & may be divided into infinite parts. Uddālaka propounds the theory that matter is infinitely divisible & qualitatively distinct. There is no such thing as the transformation of things into one another. The atomic theory of Kanāda is also suggested in the view that the particles only combine and separate. Matter is represented as a chaotic mass, like the juices of various bees blended together in honey. (Adamson — "The Development of Greek Philosophy. p.50). Prāna is life, though it arises out of matter, is not fully explicable by matter. Consciousness, though it arises from life is not intelligible on the hypothesis of

of prāṇa or vitalism. When we get to man we have self conscious thought. Man is higher than stones and stars, beast & birds, since he can enter into the ~~self conscious~~ fellowship of reason and will, affection & conscience, yet he is not the highest, since he feels the pain of contradiction.

Are the Upaniṣads pantheistic?

Pantheism is the view which identifies God with the sum of things and denies transcendence. If the nature of the world is exhausted completely by the course of the world, if the two become one, then we have pantheism. In the Upaniṣads we read that the world does not take away from the perfection of the absolute. "That is full and this is full. From that full rises this full. Taking away this full from that, what remains is yet full."

As early as the Ṛg-Veda it is said that the all beings are only a fourth of the Puruṣa, while the three other four the remain immortal in the shining regions. (X. 90. 3). According to the Bṛhadāraṇyaka, (V. 14.) one fooh of the Brahman consists of the three worlds, the second of the triple knowledge of the Veda, the third of the three vital breaths, while the fourth, exalted above the dust of the earth, shines as the sun. (IV. 3. 32.) The Upaniṣads declare that

the universe is in God, but they never say that the universe is God. They refuse to imprison God in the world. God is transcendent as well as immanent. The Upanisads are not pantheistic in the bad sense of the term. Things are not thrown together in a heap called God, without unity, purpose or distinction of values. The philosophy of the Upanisads revolts at the deistic conception of God. It does not say that God is outside the world, and now & again makes His presence felt by super-natural revelation or miraculous interference. If is pantheism, if it is pantheism to say that God is the fundamental reality of our lives & we cannot live without Him. Everything on earth is finite, & in finite, perfect & imperfect. Everything seeks a good beyond itself, tries to rid itself of its finiteness & become perfect. The finite seeks self-transcendence. This clearly establishes that the Infinite Spirit is working in the finite. The real is the basis of the unreal. If the doctrine of the indwelling of the divine is enough justification for condemning a system as pantheism, the philosophy of the Upanisads is a pantheism. But pantheism in this stage is an essential feature of all true religion.

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